

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS PREVIEW:

Tuesday, April 9, 1985

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

COLLECTION FOR A KING: OLD MASTER PAINTINGS FROM THE
DULWICH PICTURE GALLERY OPENS AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. March 19, 1985. The Dulwich Picture Gallery, located in the southern outskirts of London, was founded in the early nineteenth century, some ten years before the National Gallery in London (1824), and is the oldest public art museum in Britain. Its important collection is, however, surprisingly little known to the American public.

Thirty-six splendid old master paintings from this collection go on view in the United States for the first time. The exhibition can be seen in the West Building Ground Floor Galleries of the National Gallery of Art from April 14 through September 2, 1985.

These paintings demonstrate the extraordinary range of the Dulwich Picture Gallery's small but distinguished collection. Included are such celebrated works as Rembrandt's Girl Leaning on a Stone Pedestal, Poussin's The Triumph of David and Rinaldo and Armida, Van Dyck's Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy, Prince of Oneglia, Canaletto's Old Walton Bridge over the Thames, Murillo's The Flower Girl, and Gainsborough's An Unknown Couple in a Landscape. Other artists represented in the exhibition include Willem van de

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Velde, Guercino, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Claude Lorrain, William Hogarth, and Sir Thomas Lawrence.

The Committee of Honor for the exhibition, in addition to His Excellency Sir Oliver Wright, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, includes: The Honorable Charles H. Price II, United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James's; The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Gowrie, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Arts; Peter Bowring, Esq.; Sir Hugh Casson; Sir Douglas Fairbanks; Dr. Basil Greenhill; Sir Leonard Hooper, Chairman, Board of Governors, Dulwich College; Sir Michael Levey, Director, National Gallery, London; The Rt. Hon. Lord Shawcross; and James B. Sherwood, Esq.

This exhibition has been supported at the National Gallery of Art in Washington by a generous grant from Gerald D. Hines Interests.

Giles Waterfield, Director of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, organized the exhibition and has also been instrumental in producing the catalogue. Arthur Wheelock, curator of northern baroque painting, is the coordinating curator for the National Gallery of Art.

The creation of the Dulwich Picture Gallery as it exists today came about because of the generosity and foresight of a Frenchman, Noel Desenfans, a collector and art dealer in London at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1790, Desenfans was asked to assemble a group of paintings for the King of Poland, Stanislas Augustus, who wished to create a national gallery in Warsaw. However, because of events in Poland which forced King Stanislas Augustus to abdicate in 1795, the paintings never reached that country. Desenfans expanded the collection further and offered it first to Russia and then to England for the creation of a National Gallery. When these attempts failed, he stipulated in his will that his paintings be left to an institution which would preserve and exhibit them. In 1811, the collection

was bequeathed to Dulwich College -- now one of nine institutions affiliated with Alleyn's College of God's Gift -- by Desenfans' friend and heir, Sir Francis Bourgeois.

The building which houses the Dulwich collection was designed by the famous British architect, Sir John Soane, and was completed in 1814. It was the first building designed specifically for use as a public picture gallery; other major collections had been housed in buildings such as palaces which were originally built for different purposes. The neoclassical building contains both galleries to exhibit the paintings and a mausoleum which serves as the final resting place for the Gallery's primary benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Desenfans and Sir Francis Bourgeois.

A brief (8-10 minute) audio-visual presentation in the West Building Lecture Hall accompanies the show. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. It will travel to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in October 1985.

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